

DOWNTOWN

BUSINESS COMMISSION

HALIFAX

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



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Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo Highland Dance Team entertaining all ages at The Halifax Lights Festival. Stoo Metz/Click Productions



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Cover – Salsa on Argyle Street. Photo by Stoo Metz Photography

Cover, lower left – Pet portraits with Santa at the Halifax Lights Festival.
Photo by Stoo Metz/Click Productions

Cover, lower middle – Colourful summer fashion at Biscuit General Store

Cover, lower right – NSCAD University Fountain Campus, recipient of a Gritty to Pretty Façade Lighting Grant. Photo by Stoo Metz Photography

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



FIFA World Cup Argyle Street Viewing Party, presented by HFX Wanderers



AT LAST YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, former Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper looked out at the crowd of a thousand business commission professionals gathered and stated, "You all suffer from acute topophilia." After a dramatic pause, as we all wondered if we should see a doctor, he explained, "A love of place." The word was coined by British poet John Betjeman, but in our modern parlance, it can perhaps be better understood from Halifax's own poet, Joel Plaskett, who wrote, "There's a reason why I love this town." We all love this city. We love Downtown Halifax.

This year's annual report is dedicated to our brand new, three-year strategic plan. Between September and February, our organization, led by a special committee created by the Board of Directors, engaged with restaurants, retailers, hotels, landlords, office workers, developers, residents, economic development partners, and other stakeholders through focus groups and analysis of our 2018 membership survey. With that feedback the Board and staff worked to clearly identify our top priorities over the next few years.

A vision needs to be a stretch – but be attainable. We decided that our vision is to be nothing less than *Canada's favourite downtown*. That sounds right, doesn't it? You'd be pretty hard-pressed to find a visitor that doesn't love this place. Even those who live here and who criticize it, often do so out of love and a desire to see the potential of this place fully realized.

As you will see in the pages that follow, our plan seeks to attain this vision by adopting five strategic priorities, each with its own set of programs and objectives. Those priorities are:

- Downtown Mobility
- Good Development
- Downtown Placemaking
- DHBC Leadership
- Member Services

We are excited about working with you, our members, through our Action Teams, Neighbourhood Captains Program, or membership engagement strategy. We are excited about executing this plan over the next three years to realize this vision together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul MacKinnon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

MISSION

CANADA'S FAVOURITE DOWNTOWN



A hungry crowd at DHBC's Welcome to Downtown Halifax BBQ



173 dedicated volunteers at the 25th Anniversary Clean Sweep

VISION

**TO PASSIONATELY PURSUE A MORE
PROSPEROUS AND VIBRANT DOWNTOWN.**

DHBC STAFF



Kimberly Dossett
Director of Operations



Ivy Ho
Director of Communications



Allana MacDonald Mills
Director of Marketing



Kuda Ndadzungira
Membership Engagement
Manager



Nate Taylor
Operations and Events
Coordinator



Eric Jonsson
Navigator Street Outreach
Program Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-2019



Gordon Whittaker, Chair
Oakport Limited/
A.S. Developments Inc.

Adriana Afford, Vice Chair
Argyle Fine Art

**Pino Pagnottella,
Secretary Treasurer**
Sterling Properties

Eric Burchill, Member at Large
Southwest Properties Limited

Scott McGaw, Member at Large
Meridia Recruitment

Lisa Drader-Murphy
Lisa Drader-Murphy

Erin Esiyok-Prime
Events East Group

Sarah Flynn
Sara Flynn Consulting

Joe McGuinness
Legendary Hospitality Group

Kristin O'Toole
Develop Nova Scotia

Sanjeev Pushkarna
Nova Scotia Power

Kourosh Rad
RAD Consulting

Christian Rankin
Obladee Wine Bar, Wonderlust Media

Jake Whalen
Halifax Regional Municipality

A refreshing beverage at The Stubborn Goat Beer Garden

ACTION TEAM MEMBERS 2018-2019

ADVOCACY ACTION TEAM

Eric Burchill
Southwest Properties
Limited

Scott McGaw
Meridia Recruitment

Deborah Page
Develop Nova Scotia

Pino Pagnottella
Sterling Properties

Sanjeev Pushkarna
Nova Scotia Power

Gordon Whittaker
Oakport Limited/A.S.
Developments Inc.

BEAUTIFICATION ACTION TEAM

Adriana Afford
Argyle Fine Art

Lindsay Ann Cory
Nocturne

T. J. Maguire
Develop Nova Scotia

Pino Pagnotella
Sterling Properties

Kourosh Rad
RAD Consulting

Annie Rankmore
Discover Halifax

Jeremy Smith
Freak Lunchbox

Nick Willwerth
Crombie REIT

Peter Wünsch
Breakhouse

MARKETING ACTION TEAM

Barbara Broome
The Prince George Hotel

Katie Conklin
Discover Halifax

Erin Esiyok-Prime
Events East Group

Sarah Flynn
Sarah Flynn Consulting

Krista Lingley
Parks Canada

Danielle McLean
RCR Hospitality Group

Jessica Muzzerall
Halifax Marriott Harbourfront
Hotel

**Laura Oakley/Jennifer
Kurmey**
Legendary Hospitality Group

Pino Pagnotella
Sterling Properties

Jessica Pettigrew
Crombie REIT

Emily Richards
Neptune Theatre

Jenna Rideout/Kelly Rose
Develop Nova Scotia

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT ACTION TEAM

Tyler Beers
Marsh Canada Limited

Dan Bourque
Crombie REIT

Kevin Burgess
Ambassatours Gray Line/
Murphy's on the Water

Pino Pagnotella
Sterling Properties

Christian Rankin
Obladee Wine Bar

GUIDING PRINCIPALS

Best & Next Practices. Beauty & Design. Diversity. Environmental Sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

- Strategic development framework for Downtown
- Design guidelines for private & large-scale infrastructure development
- Change in the construction mitigation bylaw
- Effective communications related to large development projects.

GOOD DEVELOPMENT

Encourage development that positively impacts Downtown vibrancy & prosperity

URBAN MOBILITY

Advocate for an easily accessible, pedestrian friendly Downtown that permits ready access to downtown businesses

OBJECTIVES

- Improved street parking availability
- Increased public transit ridership
- Expanded alternative mobility options
- Increased pedestrian traffic
- Reduced truck traffic

ACTION TEAMS / AREAS OF FOCUS

Advocacy. Beautification. Marketing & Communications. Member Engagement.



MEMBER SERVICES
Build relationships with members, be a resource for problem solving and advocate for common issues

- OBJECTIVES**
- Be the voice of the members
 - Create collaboration & input opportunities
 - Increase professional development opportunities
 - Enhance awareness & promotion of member benefits

DHBC LEADERSHIP
Be the recognized expert resource & voice of Downtown, the leader, facilitator & convener of strategic discourse & communications

- OBJECTIVES**
- Enhance DHBC's profile
 - Be the expert on all things downtown
 - Strengthen & improve the DHBC brand
 - Increase awareness of Navigator outreach program among members

DOWNTOWN PLACEMAKING
Champion best practices in planning, design, management & utilization of public spaces that inspire continuing & increasing vibrancy in Downtown

- OBJECTIVES**
- Strengthen beautification efforts Downtown
 - Increase event attendance
 - Advocate for & inform development, maintenance & activation of new & existing public spaces

DHBC STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022



The DHBC Downtown Halifax Crew keeping the streets clean during the summer months

II This plan focuses primarily on strategic opportunities for enhancing the Downtown area and positioning DHBC as the expert in Downtown issues. II

IN SEPTEMBER 2018, THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS BEGAN with the guidance of a Task Force struck by the Board of Directors of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC). The Task Force met regularly to provide direction to the consulting team. This was a very collaborative process that considered the changing landscape in Downtown Halifax and the opportunities the plan presents over the next three years.

The process was designed to receive input from seven focus groups – five from members, one each residents and DHBC staff. In addition, interviews were conducted with Mayor Mike Savage and the DHBC Executive Director.

A workshop was held with the Board and senior staff at the end of November at which results from the focus groups were presented and discussed, the vision and mission were finalized, and strategic priorities were deliberated which were then further refined by staff, the Task Force and finally, by the Board of Directors.

Where the previous strategic plan was organized around functional pillars – advocacy, beautification, marketing and communications, and member engagement – this plan focuses primarily on strategic opportunities for enhancing the Downtown area and positioning DHBC as the expert in Downtown issues.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles provide the lens through which DHBC will consider any of the work it undertakes:

- **Best and next practices** – we are knowledgeable about, promote, and champion Downtown best and next practices from around the globe, as appropriate for Downtown Halifax.
- **Beauty and design** – we foster and encourage principles of beauty and good design as being integral and central to placemaking in Downtown Halifax.
- **Diversity** – we value diversity in its many forms, and we strive to ensure our policies, programs, partnerships and practices are inclusive and reflective of our members and the community we serve.
- **Environmental sustainability** – all our initiatives and undertakings will be assessed with a view to minimizing our environmental impact that includes, but is not limited to, mitigating harm to the environment and decreasing our consumption of resources.
- **Fiduciary accountability** – we are committed to managing our finances and operations in accordance with best practices in the not-for-profit sector and reporting annually to our members and other key stakeholders.
- **Transparency** – we are open and accountable to our members and other key stakeholders by communicating and providing information in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Getting Hali the Community Train ready for The Chronicle Herald Holiday Parade of Lights

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

DOWNTOWN MOBILITY

DHBC will advocate for an easily accessible, pedestrian-friendly Downtown Halifax that permits ready access to Downtown businesses.

Achieve improved on-street parking availability.

- Establish position, with regards to how to achieve more coordinated public lands sale and development
- Communications strategy

Increase public transit ridership into and throughout the Downtown core.

- Participate in Leading with Transit advocacy group

Expand alternative mobility options within Downtown.

- Research and advocate for best practices, regarding multi-modal transportation (e.g., scooters, Uber/Lyft, Segways, etc.)
- Advocate for maintaining enhanced ferry schedule with Downtown Dartmouth and Halifax Transit)

Increase pedestrian traffic.

- Pedestrian counters
- Work with HRM on installation of "Rainbow Art" crosswalk
- Downtown advocate for extended Argyle Street light canopy

Reduce truck traffic in Downtown core.

- Advocate for alternate solutions for Halifax Port-related truck traffic and other truck traffic (HRM, Port of Halifax, CN, etc.)

GOOD DEVELOPMENT

DHBC will encourage development that positively impacts Downtown vibrancy and prosperity.

Promote creation of a strategic development framework for Downtown.

- Establish position, with regards to how to achieve more coordinated public lands sale/development
- Communications strategy

Influence and inform design guidelines for private and large-scale infrastructure development.

(e.g. Cogswell District, HRM by Design).

- Lead Cogswell Coalition

Advocate for change in the construction mitigation by-law to mandate that BIDs have input into mitigation plans.

- Advocate for by-law change, requiring BID involvement in, and public disclosure of, construction mitigation plans (with other BIDs)

Ensure effective communications to member and Downtown visitors, related to large development projects.

- Distribute communication material to members through the Downtown Crew (seasonal)
- Communications strategies for developments
- Podcast
- Cogswell District communications plan with HRM Public Affairs
- Create, facilitate, and/or promote communications plans for large-scale development projects (e.g. Cogswell District, Halifax Port expansion, Ralston building, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, etc.)

DOWNTOWN PLACEMAKING

DHBC will champion best practices in Downtown planning, design, management, and utilization of public spaces that inspire continuing and increasing vibrancy in Downtown Halifax.

Strengthen beautification efforts.

- Open Grant
- Mural Grant
- Façade Lighting Grant
- Creation of a Mural Grant Jury and launch new grant program
- Relaunch Façade Lighting Grant with enhanced guidelines
- Manage graffiti clean-up
- Seasonal decorations, e.g. Christmas wreaths
- Manage Banner Program
- Supervise poster kiosk monthly maintenance

Increase event attendance.

- Seek changes to provincial liquor laws (work with Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia, Halifax Regional Municipality, and event organizers)
- Sponsorship of events (through an application process)
- Established sponsorships (e.g. The Chronicle Herald Parade of Lights, I Love Local HFX's Open City and City Harvest)
- Sponsorship activation (e.g. Scotiabank Blue Nose Marathon, The Chronicle Herald Holiday Parade of Lights, The Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, and other)
- DHBC public events
- Ongoing Argyle Street events/activations
- Clean Sweep volunteer clean-up
- Virtual reality video tour of Downtown Halifax

Advocate for and inform the development, maintenance, and activation of new and existing public spaces.

- Supervise Downtown Halifax Crew (May-August)
- Manage painted picnic tables program
- Tunes at Noon outdoor summer music series in Grand Parade (July-August)
- Expand and implement Cornwallis Park holiday lights installation (November-January)
- Extend length of Cornwallis Park holiday lights installation
- Work with HRM on usage and activation plan of key public spaces

DHBC LEADERSHIP

DHBC will be the recognized expert resource and voice of Downtown Halifax – the leader, facilitator, and convener of strategic discourse and communications.

Enhance DHBC's profile through increased media attention, more speaking engagements, and strategic facilitation and communications.

- Active participation in Art of City Building conference/ The Carmichael Lecture (with Develop Nova Scotia, RAD Consulting, National PR, new partners)
- Launch and execute year one of 2019-2022 Strategic Plan
- Co-lead IDA Canada Policy Summit II
- Host Federal Election Candidate Forum (Halifax)

Be the expert on all things Downtown through the collection, dissemination, and application of data, research, and knowledge translation.

- Promote new "Downtown Declaration" in advance of 2019 federal election
- Work with Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs and Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to create long-term relationship with Nova Scotia BIDs

- Help facilitate creation of new BIDs
- Investigate BID boundary expansion(s)
- DHBC to work with HRM and Halifax Partnership to secure research to input into State of Canada's Downtowns toolkit
- Participation in IDA Canada Leadership Group (2019-2021)
- Accumulation and exchange of best practices through research, conferences, memberships (IDA, IDA Canada, Downtowns Atlantic Canada, etc.)
- Meltwater Media monitoring (issues and programming)
- Ongoing website updates
- Create new profile-enhancing programs (i.e., podcast)
- Ongoing information sessions/forums as needed

Strengthen and improve the DHBC brand and execute marketing programs that align with and support it.

- Brand Update (revisit and refresh brand, new tagline, brand asset collection, e.g., still photography)
- Social media strategy
- Brand campaign (e.g. general advertising, Google Adwords)
- Seasonal campaigns
- Summer (e.g. Patio Campaign, Downtown Halifax Picnic)
- Holiday (e.g. The Halifax Lights Festival)
- Winter (e.g. Valentine's Day, March Break)
- Marketing collateral and assets (could include signage, new branded tent, Park Smart brochure)
- Delegates Welcome Program
- Promote Downtown goals to other organizations

Maintain the Street Navigator Outreach Program and increase its member awareness.

- Navigator Street Outreach Program – maintain current service level
- Seek financial support for Navigator Street Outreach Program

MEMBER SERVICES

DHBC will build relationships with members, be a resource for problem-solving, and advocate for common issues.

Be the voice of the members in issues related to Downtown.

- Direct involvement and participation in HRM plans, working with identified partners (Our HRM Alliance, Halifax Partnership, Develop Nova Scotia, It's More Than Buses, Planning & Development Centre, BIDs, Cogswell Coalition, HTNS):
- Cogswell Interchange
- Downtown bike lane network
- Community Energy and Climate Action Plan
- HRM Centre Plan
- HRM by Design (five-year review)
- Advocate for activation of Downtown shuttle policy in HRM by Design
- Barrington South Heritage Conservation District
- Historic Properties Heritage Conservation District
- Advocate for Downtown and Main Streets focused commercial tax reform (with other BIDs and business groups)
- Participate in red tape reduction committee (through Halifax area BIDs)
- Continue relationship-building and advocacy with Federal Members of Parliament and Big Cities Mayors' Caucus

Create opportunities for members to collaborate on and give input into existing and emerging issues.

- Membership survey
- Member Advisory Council
- Advocacy tab on the DHBC website
- Membership meetings and events (networking socials, AGM, new development meetings, e.g. Cogswell, Queen's Marque)
- Visit members at least twice a week

- Summer and Christmas member parties
- Partnership programming – funding for like-minded organizations on projects that advance DHBC's advocacy objectives

Increase opportunities for professional development.

- Professional development sessions (e.g. Lunch & Learns, First Aid training, Navigator Outreach)
- eBay Retail Revival (support, promotion)
- Strengthen relations with ACOA (with DAC)

Enhance awareness and promotion of member benefits through increased information and knowledge sharing.

- Visit every new business with a welcome package and Neighbourhood Captain
- Member inquiries
- Membership communications (e.g. bulletins, notices, bi-weekly, Downtown Members Update, Annual Report, new members page on the DHBC website)
- Neighbourhood member events (e.g. Purdy's Wharf, 1801 Hollis, TD building)
- DHBC storefront activation (e.g. seasonal, partner events, displays, SOCAN, Spotify)
- Leverage Neighbourhood Captains to celebrate/welcome new members
- Maintain DHBC database to include as many members as possible
- Train new and current members on using the DHBC website
- Distribute Member Handbook to all members
- "100 Things to Do" in Downtown Halifax brochure
- Curbside Waste Management program

HOW DHBC IS FUNDED

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

THE IDEA OF AN ORGANIZATION DEVOTED TO serving a particular Business Improvement District (BID) is a very simple one: businesses in a defined area, typically a downtown or commercial main street, hold a vote and agree to create a special levy, which is added to their commercial taxes. This levy goes to a specific organization with a mandate to do marketing, events, advocacy, beautification, networking, and undertake other projects of common interest. The very first BID in the world was created on Bloor Street, Toronto, in 1970. In the 50 years since, hundreds of BIDs have formed in Canada, thousands in the United States and many more around the world.

Members of the public enjoying a Thanksgiving celebration in the DHBC storefront



DHBC LEVY

A beautiful tree of lights as part of the Splendour in the Park seasonal display in Cornwallis Park. Photo by Stoo Metz Photography



DOWNTOWN HALIFAX BUSINESS COMMISSION (DHBC) was established through a vote of the businesses in the Downtown in 1987. Once created by vote, the levy is mandatory. It is charged to all commercial property owners, identified as a separate line item on their municipal tax bill (which consists of eight different rates). Landlords typically then charge this proportionately to their tenants. Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) collects the levy and remits it to DHBC.

DHBC is led by a Board of Directors, consisting of members who are elected to their positions at the annual meeting each June. The Board creates an annual budget and sets the appropriate levy amount to fund it. This amount then needs to be approved by HRM Council, as part of their annual budget process.

Last year, the BID levy represented 80% of our total revenues for the organization.

This year's BID levy is \$0.091 per \$100 of assessment. Expressed another way, the BID levy represents approximately 2.43% of your total municipal tax bill.

DHBC always seeks to provide excellent value for members. Whether you are a large multi-tenant landlord paying tens of thousands of dollars, or a small business paying several hundred dollars, we are happy to meet with you to discuss the return on investment you are getting from your DHBC membership.

2019-2020 BUDGET

REVENUE

Members Levy	\$1,143,665
Advocacy	\$66,000
Beautification	\$96,190
Communications & Marketing	\$3,335
Member Engagement	\$16,653
Administrative	\$12,783
	<hr/>
	\$1,338,626
Carry forward from 2018-2019	\$68,991

TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,407,617
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OPERATING EXPENSES

Advocacy	\$154,036
Beautification	\$224,546
Communications & Marketing	\$297,750
Member Engagement	\$84,678
Administrative	\$646,607

TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$1,407,617
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SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ (0)
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*Back cover, lower left –
A hearty meal at The Old
Triangle*

*Back cover, lower middle
– Strategizing at
Trampoline Branding*

*Back cover, lower right –
Browsing at The Black
Market Boutique*

DOWNTOWN HALIFAX BUSINESS COMMISSION

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